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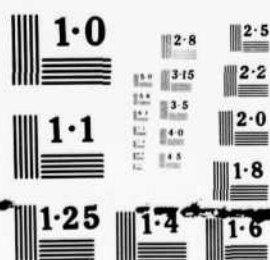UNCLASSIFIED   CNA-PROFESSIONAL PAPER-20   NL

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THE 1967 JUNE WAR: SOVIET NAVAL DIPLOMACY
AND THE SIXTH FLEET – A REAPPRAISAL

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THE 1967 JUNE WAR: SOVIET NAVAL DIPLOMACY AND
THE SIXTH FLEET -- A REAPPRAISAL

by

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THE 1967 JUNE WAR: SOVIET NAVAL DIPLOMACY AND THE SIXTH FLEET -- A REAPPRAISAL

Introduction _This report discusses the_

1.   The June War ~~marks~~ as a turning point in Soviet deployments to the Mediterranean. The USSR doubled its force during the crisis period and force levels have continued to rise ever since. Furthermore as a direct result of the war the Russians were able to gain access to both Alexandria and Port Said, which had hitherto been denied them on the scale and for the periods which they had desired. Such was the rate of Soviet increase that by the October War in 1973 the United States Sixth Fleet was outnumbered by Soviet units. Unlike in 1967 the Soviets were able to deploy amphibious ships in large numbers and also used anti-carrier tactics. Although Soviet activity was still marginal compared with its later efforts the 1967 war is important because the Soviets were observed attempting to use Naval power in ways which would have been impossible a decade earlier.

2.   It is considered that an essential precondition for successful crisis management is the ability to respond quickly to the needs of the situation and to act not only in response to one's client's needs in the light of one's own best interest, but also bearing in mind the efficiency of the opposition's infrastructure and the extent to which this is harmonized with the situation at sea. This

is particularly pertinent in fast-moving realtime situations such
as the Six Day War, where quick, effective response became the
essence of success. This has become even more relevant since the
1967 War with the upheaval of the Naval status quo in the Mediter-
ranean, and the need therefore for tactical and command and control
advantages which will enable the West to maintain some advantage in
crisis situations. At the same time this may become increasingly
a major variable in the calculations of both sides when taking
risks which could end in escalation, and thus requires special
attention.

Soviet Objectives

3.   Let us first look at Soviet objectives. The acquisition of
Egyptian bases can be seen both as fulfilling necessary Naval needs
and also political goals in an area where United States interests
could be countered. To ascribe a "master plan" to the Soviets
clearly is unsupportable given the complexity of the Middle East
and they, along with Western powers, cannot claim the sort of
causal control which must be the hard core of any successful grand
design. Beneath the Soviets' pragmatic and opportunist approach was
their defense doctrine of the late sixties. The need for warm water
bases for launching counter strikes against United States SSBNs and
carrier forces was equally as critical as the need to gain influence
in the Third World and both needs might have been fulfilled by a
Soviet polity to promote Arab interests against the West. Besides

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its strategic position the Soviets were acutely aware too of the significance of Middle East oil to the West.

4.   The chronology of Soviet visits and arms deals with Egypt reveals just how little the Arabs had been prepared to make con- cessions to the Soviets.[1] The Nasser regime was equally aware that a Soviet presence and patronage would not necessarily be any more equable, or domestically palatable than the British one had been. At the same time Egypt needed Russian equipment and expertise. Events were to prove that an Arab defeat would in fact force Nasser into a measure of temporary dependency. Even after the large arms deal of June 1963 (two submarines, two destroyers, and over 30 Osa and Komar FPBs) Egypt had still declined Naval facilities. The last major Soviet arms deal with Egypt before the six Day War was in August 1965, and there was only one Soviet port visit to Port Said between the March 1966 visit of five ships from the Black Sea Fleet and the war. The visit of two Sixth Fleet destroyers to Port Said in September 1966 may have been a deliberate counterstroke to the Soviets.

5.   Given the Soviets' lack of success in making inroads in Egypt, their vocal and diplomatic support was disproportionately large. Russia regularly claimed that it would support the Arabs if attacked, but disclaimed charges of wishing to start a major mili- tary conflict. Ambassador Dimitri Poxhdaev is alleged to have

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given excessive encouragement to Nasser's war aims and the information provided by the Russians that the Israelis were planning a pre-emptive strike and the false information that they were massing on the Syrian border in the face of UN observers' disclaimers indicates a desire by the Russians to push Nasser over the brink.[2] This may be ascribing too much influence to the Russians since the Arabs had very much charted their own course in the weeks before the war. Furthermore the Russians had no control over the other protagonists, and they, not the Russians, controlled Arab responses. This is born out by the Russians disapproval of the Arab closure of the Gulf of Aqaba, despite their propaganda about American Fleet reactions to this. All Nasser probably expected from the Black Sea Fleet was the neutralization of the Sixth Fleet.

6.   If the Russians were to fulfill their promises of military assistance should the need arise, they would require prior negotiation for a quick response situation. The fact remains that every western intelligence source expected the Arabs to lose. The Russians own assessments could not have widely differed. In this equation Nasser's view of the Russian role is significant. To maintain credibility Russia would need careful reinforcement plans. This view though runs contrary to the mainstream of Soviet-Arab relations prior to the war. If the Soviets were to give assistance it was much more likely to be on an ad hoc basis, as a direct response to military events.

7.   The last thing which the Soviets desired was the liquida-
tion of Israel. This they knew to be highly unlikely, and moreover
a situation which the United States would not tolerate. At the
same time they had to keep face with the Arabs and show a measure
of support. The method and speed of a Russian build-up would then
have been paramount, and in certain contexts intervention would
risk a general war with the United States.

8.   U.S. Objectives: The factors shaping United States policy
have been examined elsewhere. These analyses have focused on the
U.S.'s problem of Mideast intervention concurrent with the Vietnam
War, the interaction of public opinion with decision-making in the
White House, the U.S.'s economic interests in the Mideast and her
desire to remain on good terms as much with Arab countries such as
Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Libya as to be Israel's protector, so as
to prevent polarization.

9.   The United States did have good reasons for avoiding a
second involvement, irrespective of domestic pressures, not least
of all because her reinforcement capability was reduced (the amphib-
ious capability in the Mediterranean had been much reduced because
of Vietnam; a battalion of 2000 Marines was currently on station).
Despite this the Joint Chiefs of Staff saw no immediate problems
since the Atlantic Fleet, currently containing an attack carrier
and ASW carrier, could be dispatched immediately. Within two weeks
four carrier task forces and a Marine Brigade could have been sent

to the Mideast. Furthermore, as McNamara said, the United States'
opponents could not meet several commitments either.

10.   More relevant was the fact that Israel herself was confident
and all that she expected from the U.S. when war came was the neutral-
ization of the Black Sea Fleet in the Mediterranean and a reiteration
of the guarantee which the U.S. had already given - namely to main-
tain the sovereignty of the state of Israel. Disregarding internal
Jewish influence in the United States, President Johnson was committed
to this tenet, as indeed were most Americans. The real problem was
how best to demonstrate U.S. support without intimidating the Arabs,
at the same time containing the Russians, with the prior knowledge
that the whole U.S. and British intelligence community firmly pre-
dicted an overwhelming Israeli victory. Restraining the Israelis
became one of President Johnson's major problems.

11.   The Closure of the Gulf of Aqaba: When Nasser closed the Gulf
of Aqaba on 22 May 1967 he posed the United States a thorny problem.
Not only was it a violation of international law, a most dangerous
precedent, a casus belli in the eyes of Israel, and a test of UN
solidarity, it raised the whole question of the bargaining power
of the Arab oil producers, particularly for Great Britain. In the
event this was to be the only area during the crisis where hostili-
ties at sea could have occurred. A premature move could have upset
the balance and would not have directly affected the land battle

situation. The UN's rejection of a multi-maritime force and the
speed of events themselves saved the situation. This was equally
fortunate for Britain. Not only was she still militarily over-
extended she was also economically vulnerable. She was loath to
show a lead in lifting the blockade with the Arab threats to cut
off her oil hanging over her head. Despite this she was still a
factor which the Russians had to consider since she could still
deploy on paper three carriers, two commando carriers, and two
assault ships with their attendant escorts, although Britain, like
the United States and the Soviets, had the normal availability
problems. For the moment Britain wanted to appear to be taking no
side at all. Although she had not been as demonstrative as the U.S.
in supporting Israel, she too would not stand by and see Israel go
under.

12.   The question remains of the extent to which either U.S. or
multi-national intervention in the blockade could have prevented
the war. If such a move had been successful Israel would have lost
her main casus belli and might have legitimately been castigated
as the aggressor, although this is partly annulled by the events
of the preceding weeks, with aggressive acts from both sides and
the request for the removal of the UN peacekeeping force from the
armistice line between the UAR and Israel. All these pointed to a
declaration of intent on both sides, and the lifting of the blockade
would probably not have altered matters, but merely exacerbated
relations between the relievers and the Arabs.

13.   Initial Soviet Actions: Throughout 1967 the mean daily
Soviet presence in the Mediterranean consisted of 10 major and minor
surface units and intelligence-collection ships* (see table 1).   Of
this total there were usually four to five large units - light
cruisers and Guided Missile Destroyers.   The minor units consisted
of light Destroyers and a mixture of Frigate size and light escort
vessels.   On most days during that year there would be only two
(and occasionally three) missile-armed ships in this area and at
most two intelligence-gatherers.   The total mean daily deployment
of all Soviet vessels totaled only eighteen, and this included all
support ships and various categories of oceanographic ships.   At
no time during the June crisis did Soviet major and minor surface
deployments and AGIs exceed eighteen vessels, and the total number
of ships at any one time was only twenty seven.

14.   On May 22, the day that Nasser began his blockade in the
Straits of Tiran, the Soviets notified Turkey that they intended
transiting ten warships through the Golden Horn.   The Montreux Con-
vention stipulated eight days notice.   In the event the transit
began on 30 May, and the first groups consisted of support vessels.
No further requests were made during the crisis period.   The Soviets
soon made it clear that they did not intend supporting the United
States in raising the blockade so the movement could not be con-
strued as a possible preparation for this.   Although the 10 warships

*AGI = Auxiliary General Intelligence

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TABLE 1

BLACK SEA FLEET DEPLOYMENT OF SURFACT SHIPS
TO THE MEDITERRANEAN

Type	Mean Daily 1967 deployment[2]	May 1967 Minimum	May 1967 Maximum	June 1967 Minimum	June 1967 Maximum
Major combatants					
Missile-armed	2.4	0	2	1	6
(SAM	1.5	0	2	1	4)
(SSM	1.0	0	0	0	2)
Non-missile cruiser/ destroyer	2.0	0	–	2	4
Escort	2.2	3	6	2	6
Total major combatants	6.6	3	9	8	15
Minor combatants	1.4	0	3	2	3
Intelligence (AGI)	1.8	1	2	1	3
Amphibious	1.3	0	0	0	3
Auxiliary	5.4	2	6	5	8
Other[1]	1.4	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	18.5	7	19	18	27

[1] Base development and scientific ships
[2] Some components do not add to total because of rounding

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would double the Soviet Naval contingent, they would not challenge the numerical superiority of the Sixth Fleet, let alone the strength that would be amassed if the British joined with the Americans. Of the total Soviet force deployed in early June six were missile firing, and could pose a tangible threat to the two U.S. carrier groups.

15.   What is significant is what the Russians did not send into the Mediterranean. Although their new deployment was a major departure from past patterns, they could have made a much greater show of force. Their Black Sea order of battle in June showed a force of fifty three units, and there was always the possibility of reinforcement from the Northern and Baltic Fleets, particularly of subsurface units. (see table 2).

16.   The Soviets had ample time in which to begin a policy which has now become commonplace with them - "contingency scheduling", that is, alerting the Turks to Naval moves yet retaining the option not to deploy. Such a policy enables them to deploy a larger than normal force in the event of a crisis situation. Either the Soviets had not realized the potential of such a policy in May or they were not convinced of the value of such a dramatic surge of Naval power. The latter is much more likely. It is possible that the Russians fully realized that in the last resort any form of Soviet Naval intervention was foolhardy. They had neither the tactical air nor the amphibious capability.

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TABLE 2

BLACK SEA FLEET SURFACE-SHIP ORDER OF BATTLE
MAY-JUNE 1967

Old heavy cruiser	1 Kirov
Guided missile light cruiser	1 Sverdlov (1 + 2 SAM)
Light cruiser	3 Sverdlov 1 Chapayev
Guided-missile destroyer	1 Kynda (2 + 4 SSM, 1 + 2 SAM) 5 Kashin (2 + 2 SAM) 2 Krupnyy (2 SSM) 2 Kildin (1 SSM) 1 Kotlin (1 + 2 SAM)
Destroyers	7 Kotlin 9 Skoryy
Escorts	10 Riga 5 Mikka 5 Petya
Minor surface combatants	23 Poti 17 Kronshtadt 6 OSA 10 Komar 184 Other

17.   What, then, was the purpose of the initial Soviet response?
The additional units may have been deployed in response to the
move of the two U.S. strike carriers (SARATOGA and AMERICA) into
the Sea of Crete area on 29 May. This is the less likely explana-
tion. The Sea of Crete could be regarded as a normal holding posi-
tion of the Sixth Fleet for such a situation, and a move therefore
could not be construed as a departure from normal operating patterns
or a declaration of intent. The Soviet move can be seen as a gesture
of support for Nasser, an augmentation of the normal shadowing effort,
and a sufficient force to complicate U.S. decision-making, without
posing more than a short term threat to the United States in the
event of confrontation. The avoidance of confrontation was clearly
paramount in Russian thinking. What has to be considered therefore
is the extent to which the Soviets assessed the most likely mode of
American intervention and how they could best counter this. The role
of the eighteen unit Russian force assumes less importance in this
context, except that by increasing the shadowing vessels, the Soviets
were able to assess American moves (and incidently confirm to the
Command that U.S. carrier aircraft were not supporting Israeli land
actions, despite public Soviet and Arab claims to the contrary).

18.   Since the Russians would not espouse the destruction of
Israel and they knew that the U.S. would not intervene unless either
this became a possibility or the Soviets themselves intervened,
then they could clearly see that the Sixth Fleet could not make long-
term gains to United States interest. It would merely preserve them.

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The Soviets would align themselves with the Arabs, make great propaganda from this, and probably make considerable tangible gains from an Arab defeat. In this context the Soviet deployment makes sense, and the role of the Sixth Fleet as a transmitter of national intentions towards the Soviets assumes more significance.

19.   Soviet shadowing: At no time did the Soviets become aggressive in the sense that they had been in the Sea of Japan on 10 and 11 May when a U.S. destroyer had been harassed and eventually bumped by a Soviet ship. They kept track of all major U.S. and British moves and this was done in full view of the international press as there were many newsmen on board the U.S. carriers. The two carrier groups which had arrived in the Eastern Mediterranean and taken station, one to the northeast of Crete and the other to the southwest, were shadowed throughout. On 3 June, Reuters told the world that a Soviet destroyer had joined the two minesweepers which had arrived off Malta three days earlier and were observing exercises between the British carrier Victorious and four of her frigate escorts. Victorious had left the Suez Canal on 22 May en route for the United Kingdom from the Far East. The British government kept her on station in Malta to await developments. That same 3 June the Turks reported that 3 frigates and two auxiliaries had transited the Bosporus (part of the Soviet ten ship force). The following day the world learned from the newspapers that a guided missile destroyer had relieved the destroyer tailing the USS AMERICA. The SARATOGA was

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being tailed by a Soviet intelligence trawler. The world was kept
informed of the Fleet's movements. In 1956 the world knew that
the U.S. Fleets had left their normal operating areas. In fact,
they were all closing in on Suez and no one knew where they were.
In 1967 the Russians were able to observe every move and report
it. As the crisis developed, it was in the best interests of the
United States that this should be so.

20. The USS INTREPID was transiting the Mediterranean en route
for Vietnam. She was deliberately routed well to the south of the
main task forces, waiting off Libya for permission to pass through
the Suez Canal. The U.S. gave a sure sign to the Soviets that they
were holding back and not augmenting the Sixth Fleet. It was made
clear to the Russians that she remained under CINCUSNAVEUR's com-
mand and not Commander Sixth Fleet. On 31 May she entered the Canal
and then headed east. She had been shadowed by the Soviets throughout.

21. Whilst the main shadowing operations were being conducted,
other Soviet ships exercised between Sicily and the Ionian Sea. On
4 June the one cruiser which the Soviets had deployed to the Mediter-
ranean and ten other ships were sighted at anchor 100 miles north-
west of Crete. In other words, shortly before Nasser was to suffer
military humiliation, the small Soviet force was largely inactive, but
for shadowers. There were no signs of a tacit blockade of the Israeli

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coast or serious intervention with the Sixth Fleet. It was not until 8 June that the Soviets offered any harassment of the USS AMERICA. If the Soviets were going to intervene then it was not going to be from the sea.

22.   In this context President Tito's permission for Soviet overflights assumes far more significance. His aim was solely pro-Arab. Tito saw the Israeli attack as an American-inspired move to cause Nasser's downfall. His consistency of policy is shown by the fact that he later advised Nasser to seriously reconsider the wisdom of allowing the Russians into Egypt.

23.   Initial U.S. Naval moves: Initial U.S. moves were precautionary and restricted, and designed to indicate a "wait and see" posture to the Soviets. These moves were made known internationally - all routine visits and leave continued, the Marines in Naples left for Malta on 25 May, arriving 29 May, and normal leave was promptly given. The movement of the USS INTREPID has already been mentioned. Despite the somewhat ominous rejection by the Soviets of France's plan for a four-power conference to try to settle the crisis the Sixth Fleet remained passive, with the whole striking force of the Sixth Fleet, except for the 2000 strong Marine Battalion, cruising in the Sea of Crete, a good position for a quick move towards the 200 mile zone off the Eastern Mediterranean coast, and twenty minutes flying time for a Phantom to main Arab targets. There was a Naval force east of Suez patrolling the Gulf, Arabian Sea and Red Sea area. A destroyer

was sent south from the Sixth Fleet at the end of May, and normally
a ship from this detachment would have gone north. As a precaution
this did not happen, leaving three destroyers in the area and a
command ship. This happend on 2 June at the same time that U.S.
ASW forces were moving from the North Atlantic into the Mediterranean.

24.   Options for the use of the Sixth Fleet: Until the time of
the Arab closure of the Gulf of Aqaba the Sixth Fleet was very much
neutral. The position which the White House told the Fleet to hold
was a natural one for the Sixth Fleet Command given all the factors
discussed above. However, there were options which the President
could have exercised.

25.   He could have kept his force well to the west, increasing
air reconnaissance. In fact, air reconnaissance operations were
shifted eastwards from Rota in Spain to Sigonella in Sicily and Souda
in Crete and accelerated without difficulty. It is unlikely that
Israel would have been less belligerent after her initial successes
if it was indicated that the U.S. guarantee was not inviolable. At
the same time, U.S. absence from the immediate area would not have
jeopardized Israeli integrity since a reversal of her military
fortunes was most unlikely. Israel would not have been restrained
by such a disposition. However, both the Arabs and the Soviets
would have been impressed, not necessarily by what might have seemed
U.S. timidity, but more by her clear indication that she was not

going along with an Israeli attack on the scale which ensued after the first strikes. Not only would the Arabs have been less critical of U.S. policy after the war and lost propaganda material, the Soviets (and indirectly the Yugoslavs) could not have made capital of the so-called U.S. commitment to Israeli policy. The effect after the war could have been considerable, and the U.S.'s position may not have been eroded as much as it was. Should the war have gone badly for the Israelis, then a sudden surge of U.S. naval power from the Balearics through to eastern Cyprus would have impressed everyone and sent a clear signal, perhaps far more so than the steady-state deployment during the build-up and the crisis itself. A small force could have been left in the eastern Mediterranean with the ostensible role of evacuating U.S. citizens if the need arose, although most evacuation plans centered around airlifts. On 10 June the Greek ship KARENA left Alexandria with U.S. evacuees escorted by two U.S. destroyers from the Sixth Fleet.

26.   An alternative option, and one at the other end of the spectrum compared with a western position, would have been to deploy into the Greek islands. This would have reduced the ability of the President to send clear signals to the Soviets of his intentions and would have led to doubts in the Soviet mind as to the true purpose of the Fleet. If this had been associated with U.S. harassing of tattletales and evasive tactics, the tension could have been increased, not reduced.

27.   What the above illustrates is not only the options open
to the President but also the different responses and results
likely to accrue from such moves. At times influence may not be achieved
by mere presence, and if anything may even serve to undermine
the very aim in mind.

28.   U.S. Soviet exchanges: Given the American fire-power avail-
able, the Soviets appeared to become onlookers. The early hotline
discussions between Moscow and Washington revealed a wait-and-see
approach from the Soviets. The latter's rejection of the U.S. plan
for a cease-fire and prevarications in the UN indicate several pos-
sibilities. Israeli successes, although great, may not have seemed
totally conclusive to the Russians. They may have expected an Arab
counter-attack. The quality of their intelligence may have been
poor, especially when the Arabs themselves became confused and dis-
organized. The Soviets may well have wished the Arabs to go to
the brink of disaster to open the way for Soviet patronage. When
the Israelis began their attack on the Golan heights at 0600 on
9 June, Kosygin became more alarmed. Although he knew that the U.S.
was not assisting the Israelis and that the Sixth Fleet was passive
he now wished the U.S. to put pressure on the Israelis. Kosygin
had certainly miscalculated in his assessment of the U.S.'s ability
to influence Israel. It was fortunate for all concerned that the
Israelis had achieved all that they desired.

29.   In Moscow and Washington it clearly seemed that Damascus
might fall. After the delivery of a strongly worded note to the
Israelis, Kosygin warned Washington of the possibility of Soviet
intervention. At this point President Johnson ordered the Sixth
Fleet towards the Syrian coast. On the face of it the Russians
now had the problem of facing possible massive U.S. and Israeli
air attacks if they attempted a paratrooper drop or gave air to
ground support, with all the consequences of this starting a general
war.

30.   The significance of the movement of the Sixth Fleet towards
the Syrian coast. The above is a too simple an explanation of the
effect of the prima facie move of the Sixth Fleet. An alternative
interpretation is that the President's move of the Sixth Fleet was
a gesture, and that no tangible political gain stemmed from it,
even in terms of message transmission. The Russians probably
realized this too, and were not at all concerned that their naval
presence was so inferior, the reason being that they saw the crisis
in different terms.

31.   The Soviets knew, as indeed did the U.S., that the creation
by the U.S. in 1967 of an infrastructure with Israel to facilitate
military intervention in the event of a crisis was highly dangerous
diplomatically. It was also counter to general U.S. policy. The
need for "all situation" contingency planning could not support

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this. If the UAR/USSR had exposed such a move it would have weakened not only the U.S. but also Israel. It may also have tied the U.S. to Israel in a way which would have been unacceptable. The Soviets knew that the Israelis would go it alone and that the state of U.S.-Israeli relations did not permit this sort of cooperation. In Soviet eyes this may have reduced the role of the Sixth Fleet, and goes some way to explaining the relative inactivity of the Soviet units. The Sixth Fleet's position in the eastern Mediterranean may have been counter productive, in the light of the aftermath of the war.

32.   In Soviet eyes any force, in order to be credible, must have the capacity to adjust to changing tactical situations. From the Command control in Moscow how credible did Sixth Fleet intervention appear, and how effective would this be? It must be remembered that the U.S. had always stressed that she would intervene only to save Israel from invasion. Contingency planning in any fast moving situation is difficult. Such planning tends to be on a 24 hour basis, and would be completely ad hoc. The Israelis would tend to be good at this. They have always been well prepared for military eventualities and their Air Force centralized command system would facilitate Sixth Fleet air coordination. Sixth Fleet's real problems may have arisen in its own system. The Seventh Fleet had learnt in Vietnam that when coordinating air strikes in a complex politico-military environment the President and the Secretary of Defense would take virtual command in the initial stages.

The JCS would be transmitting White House orders for the rules of engagement, target and weapon selection, and the timing and frequency of attack. At the same time US-Israeli coordination would have to have quickly embraced such factors as intelligence, target selection, SAR for Sixth Fleet aircraft, frequencies, codewords, call-signs, IFF and air traffic control liaison, EW coordination, and the use of fueling facilities and airfields. The U.S. might insist upon having forward ground controllers. Although the U.S. Navy had had considerable experience of this sort of coordination in Vietnam, and there were several officers on Admiral Martin's staff with this background, the real problems when launching these sort of operations is not technical, but the political risks that they will escalate. The instant creation of a barrier to protect the CVA's against all eventualities would pose a major problem to the fleet staff. The Soviets can see these sorts of dangers as well as the U.S., and would be as fitful of intervention as anyone.

33.   The Wider Implications: If the Soviets had sent a token force into Syria in the event of the bombardment of Damascus by Israel it is unlikely that the President of the United States would intervene to support a client who was going beyond the bounds of acceptable gain. In this light the Sixth Fleet takes on less significance in Soviet eyes, except that it calls for a clear understanding between both super powers of each other's position and the extent to which they will support their client. On the other hand, the extent to

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which the Soviets would try to restrain the Arabs is a moot point,
but they would most certainly not welcome the prospect of the U.S.
being forced into intervention to help a beleaguered Israel.
McConnell's rules of the game most certainly apply in the context.[3]
Former Secretary of State Dean Rusk told the author that the Presi-
dent and he assumed that the Soviets would use elements of their
airborne forces for intervention should the Israelis have not
desisted from their thrust towards Damascus. This was the line
which the Soviets could not allow the Israelis to cross, and Wash-
ington was well aware of this. Pressure from the U.S. on Israel to
accept a ceasefire was very much directed with this in mind as well
as concern for Israel's true intentions. As far as is known, the
Soviets never placed any of their airborne forces on alert. Helmut
Sonnenfeldt, a National Security Council adviser at the time,
confirmed that Kosygin's threats were real enough but that it was
unlikely that the Soviets would have intervened directly. They
were more likely to have increased pressure by announcing such an
alert if the Israelis had not stopped. It is a point of conjecture
as to what the U.S. would have done in the event of a Soviet inter-
vention to deter a further Israeli advance. Dean Rusk suggested
that Sixth Fleet aircraft would most likely have been landed at
Israeli airfields but he could not envisage them being used beyond
that. He confirmed that there were no contingency plans and cer-
tainly no joint U.S.-Israeli plans. The U.S. was steering a most

difficult course, and was to suffer considerable Arab invective in the aftermath for in fact having kept as neutral as was feasibly possible. However, it is the long term which is important, and the benefits of a consistent policy were reaped despite Soviet propaganda when Soviet-Egyptian relations reached their nadir from July 1972 onwards.

34.   The War Ends: The Israeli-Syrian peace saved the situation and the Sixth Fleet turned westwards. The Israelis had achieved their aim, and the Syrians wanted peace. The Soviets had been faced with a major decision and, although the peace pre-empted this, the presence of the Sixth Fleet in a now potentially hostile position was a major factor which they could not ignore. At the same time Kosygin's threat to President Johnson that the Soviets would intervene had to be backed by some tangible sign of capability.

35.   Conclusions: The size of the Soviet commitment was in keeping with the state of Arab-Soviet relations. It reflected Soviet interest and support, but the capability and deployment pattern showed that they had no intention of using seapower in a belligerent way other than for tracking purposes. A much larger force could have been deployed, but this again would not necessarily have achieved the desired results, but merely antagonized the U.S.

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36.   The presence of the Sixth Fleet was a major obstacle to any
form of Soviet intervention from the sea, either directly or in such
a way as to deter the Israelis (e.g. a threat of a blockade).

37.   The superpowers became acutely involved once the Israelis
had made disproportionate gains in Soviet eyes, and which also
seemed counter-productive to Washington. The preponderance of U.S.
Naval power may have become less significant to the Soviets in the
context of Israeli military success, since the 'Rules of the Game'
applied.

38.   The Soviets had an alternative contingency available in the
form of an air supply. This was not affected by the Naval configura-
tion. As a result they were able to give 'tangible' support to the
Arabs and thus maintain credibility. At the same time they were
able to claim that they had neutralized the Sixth Fleet. Whatever the
Naval realities it was Egyptian perception of Soviet assistance
which counted.

39.   The Sixth Fleet did have a clear diplomatic role as a fast
and effective transmitter of signals. In addition to hot line calls
nothing else gave more tangible expression to American intentions.

40.   The Soviets could have deployed a much larger Naval force and
it remains a point of conjecture of the extent to which such a
presence would have assisted the peace negotiations and therefore the
possible furtherance of Arab interests.

41.   The Soviets were as much concerned with their own interests
as Arab. The detail of their later aid programmes and deployments
is well known. They achieved their aim-use of Egyptian ports and
considerable influence through re-equipping and retraining the
defeated Arab armies. TU 16 Badgers with Egyptian markings, but
flown by Soviet crews, began maritime reconnaissance of the Sixth
Fleet. One month after the war was concluded two Soviet groups entered
Port Said and Alexandria. The Russians claimed that they were there
to prevent aggression. Not only was this a gesture to the regime,
it also acted as a deterrent to further Israeli strikes insofar as
damage to Russian ships could act as a casus belli for intervention.

42.   Whatever the nature and extent of Soviet propaganda during
the crisis the Kremlin was able to assess the extent of the U.S.
commitment partly from the posture of the Sixth Fleet. The Soviets
knew that the U.S. had not encouraged the Israelis to attack. At the
same time the Soviets were able to make propaganda from the disposi-
tion of the Sixth Fleet, and curry favor with the Arabs. If the
U.S. had maintained a lower profile with the Sixth Fleet and awaited
initial military results before assessing its reactions to the
Israeli position the post-war position of the U.S. in the Arab world
may have been more favorable. Only hindsight allows this sort of
speculation.

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43.   Despite the strong British presence in the Gulf of Aden
(a force headed by the carrier HERMES) the British government played
a waiting game because of the ramifications of an Arab oil boycott.
Lifting the blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba would have made the Israeli
strike less justifiable, but would not necessarily have prevented it.
The Israeli post-war position would have been the same and Anglo-U.S.
intervention would have been seen as another sign of a pro-Israeli
posture.

44.   It has been said that a superpower may forego support to a
client if the latter engages in excesses which produce greater risks
of general confrontation than marginal gains and similarly a major
threat to the client's vital interests may justify intervention.
In the June War the Sixth Fleet could not become directly involved
on either count. However, as has been argued earlier, a lower pro-
file for the Sixth Fleet may possibly have produced a better post-
war diplomatic position for the U.S.

45.   The extent to which a major fleet can augment political
goals may not   always   stem from its avowed military capability.
A fleet may be militarily effective but if it is deployed inappro-
priately it may defeat the very objects of the exercise. This may
be true of the use of the Sixth Fleet during the 1967 War. Evacua-
tion of U.S. citizens could have been achieved by a mixture of
other means and a limited naval effort in the eastern Mediterranean.

The availability of air power to support other U.S. interests, such as the USS LIBERTY after the attack on her, has to be weighed against the gains made from non-forward deployment. Incidents such as the LIBERTY further increase risks of escalation. In this case carrier aircraft were launched to go to her rescue on the assumption that the UAR had made the attack. The timely message from Tel-Aviv expressing Israel's "abject apologies" for the incident may have forestalled an unfortunate clash of U.S. and Egyptian forces.

46. If forward deployment in a crisis situation is to have credibility in strict military terms, the opposing superpower must perceive one's ability to intervene within time and other constraints. In 1967 the ability of the Sixth Fleet to intervene was limited. Forward deployment in a hostile diplomatic environment without the infrastructure to pose a tangible military intervention within necessary timescales can therefore be counterproductive. Soviet logistical capabilities and their ability to establish a military infrastructure in a client state may be of equal or more significance than the outward demonstration of naval deployment. Political intention and, in the event, military capability, should be assessed as much with these in mind as straightforward naval moves when reviewing the Soviet's ability to use naval power for diplomatic purposes.

47.   The narrow time scale of the events leading to the 1967 war
and the war itself may have militated against a more flexible
deployment policy for the Sixth Fleet. The need to be within
quick flying time of the Mideast coast must have seemed like a
necessary option to exercise. Holding back was a more difficult
decision to make than sailing the Fleet eastwards. However, if
the Fleet had been withheld in the west and a sudden surge later
found necessary if the sitution deteriorated, then the Soviets could
have done little to oppose this and neither could they have construed
this as being unduly provocative. Hotline calls would have con-
firmed the necessity for such a move.

48.   Later crises reveal the different ways in which Washington
can use the Sixth Fleet. The response required in 1973 was surely
different from that required in 1967. What the 1967 war tends to
show is that the Sixth Fleet should be seen as a much more flexible
instrument of diplomacy and that forward deployment is not always
synonymous with the most advantageous position, and that non-forward
deployment does not necessarily weaken the role of the Fleet or
undermine its very raison d'etre. It is possible that the operating
patterns of the Sixth Fleet could become more variable without
jeopardizing its political role in the Mideast. Conversely greater
gains might be made from such a policy.

NOTES

[1]Dragnich, George S.: The Soviet Union's Quest for Access to Naval Facilities in Egypt prior to the June War of 1967, CNA paper No. 127, July 1974.

[2]In speeches on 9 June and 23 July 1967 Nasser related the degree of "strategic" intelligence which had been provided by the USSR relating to Israeli plans for a preemptive strike. On 19 June 1967 Kosygin told the same story in the UN.

[3]"Rules of the game" for superpower naval diplomacy have been formulated by James M. McConnell of the United States Center for Naval Analyses. They can be studied in his Superpower Naval Diplomacy in the Indo-Pakistani Crisis, CNA Professional Paper No. 108, February 1973, Center for Naval Analyses, Arlington, Virginia 22209.

APPENDIX A

Main Political and Naval Events during the June War 1967

POLITICAL	NAVAL
April-May: Israeli villages shelled from Syria. Israeli air raids against Syrian positions.	24 April: 1 Riga class Soviet destroyer escort in the Mediterranean (24 APR-24 JUN).
8 May: Major Syrian terrorist act inside Israel.	
	10 May: Soviet anti-carrier exercises begins in the eastern Atlantic 10-27 MAY.
	10/11 May: U.S. destroyer bumped in the Sea of Japan by a Soviet warship.
	11 May: 2 Soviet Mirka II PECs arrive off Gibraltar from the north. They remain in the Mediterranean until 22 JUN.
	12 May: 1 Soviet Kirov class cruiser in the Mediterranean until 25 JUN. Soviet Kashin class DLG in the Mediterranean until 23 JUN. I Soviet Riga class DE in the Mediterranean until 16 JUN.

POLITICAL (CON'T)

14 May: A UAR Parliamentary delegation leaves the USSR having been given a warning of a possible Israeli strike. Egyptian armour and infantry move into Sinai.

16 May: State of emergency declared in Egypt.

18 May: On request from Cairo the UN withdraws from the armistice line between Israel and the UAR. IDF and IAF reserves are mobilized.

21 May: Israel and Egypt announced the calling up of reserves.

22 May: Nasser closes the Gulf of Aqaba.

23 May: President Johnson's speech calling for restraint.

NAVAL (CON'T)

20 May: 1 Soviet Kotlin class DD in the Mediterranean until 16 JUL.

22 May: The British carrier HMS VICTORIOUS leaves the Suez Canal for Malta. The USSR notifies Turkey of its intent to transit 10 warships through the Straits (8 days notice required).

23 May: USS SARATOGA and the USS AMERICA ordered toward the eastern Mediterranean.

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POLITICAL (CON'T)

25 May: Israeli Foreign Minister arrives in Washington. UAR doubles its forces in Sinai. U.S. suggests a multi-national maritime force to keep open the Gulf of Aqaba - this fails.

30 May: Turkey says that she will not allow U.S. bases in Turkey to be used against the Arabs. Egypt and Jordan enter a Defnese Pact.

NAVAL (CON'T)

25 May: U.S. Navy delays plans to send the USS INTREPID through Suez en route to Vietnam. The British carrier HMS HERMES is ordered to return to the Red Sea area from her passage to the Far East. The U.S. amphibious task force leaves Naples for Malta.

29 May: USS SARATOGA and the USS AMERICA rendezvous in the Sea of Crete, with the Fleet Commander, Vice Admiral William Martin flying his flag in USS LITTLE ROCK (Cruiser) accompanied by the cruiser GALVESTON and 10 destroyers.

30 May: 1 Soviet sumbarine tender in the Mediterranean until 8 June. An AGI begins tailing the SARATOGA, and breaks off on 7 June.

31 May: USS INTREPID is ordered through the canal to the Gulf of Aqaba. Other U.S. units remain in the Sea of Crete. Soviet submarine tender arrives in the Mediterranean and remains until 3 October.

1 June: The USS AMERICA is being tailed by a Soviet destroyer (50 miles south of Crete).

2 June: The USS LIBERTY sails from Rota, Spain for the Mideast. A Soviet destroyer joins 2 minesweepers off Malta tailing the British carrier VICTORIOUS and 4 frigate escorts. The destroyer USS DYESS joins 2 U.S. destroyers and a command ship in the Red Sea. U.S. ASW forces move from the North Atlantic into the Mediterranean. Six frigates and a minesweeper squadron have joined the HERMES near Aden.

3 June: 1 Soviet Kildin class DDGS in the Mediterranean until 31 August, 1 Soviet Kashin class DLG in the Mediterranean until 13 SEP; 1 modified Soviet Kotlin class DD in the Mediterranean until 13 August. Two Soviet auxiliaries also transit from the Black Sea.

4 June: 1 Soviet Krupny class DDGS in the Mediterranean until 31 August. A Soviet GMD relieves the destroyer tailing the AMERICA. The Sixth Fleet

POLITICAL (CON'T)	NAVAL (CON'T)
	4 June (Con't): is ordered to operate NW of a line from 36° N 28° 30° E and the coast of Liby at 23° E. A Soviet cruiser and 10 other ships are sighted at anchor 100 miles NW of Crete.
5 June: 0600 War begins with Israeli air strikes. 0730 King Hussein summons all Heads of Missions and claims that U.S. carriers have been used in a preemtive strike 1300Z HQ USAEUR and 7th Army Operations Center stand by to implement OPLAN T-3 AE 215.	5 June: 2 Soviet "W" class submarines sighted at the Kithera anchorage. USS AMERICA 50 miles SE of Crete (370 miles east of Port Said and 540 miles from Haifa. The SARATOGA is 110 miles NW of the AMERICA on the northern side of Crete. Both carriers can steam approximately 800 miles per day. Both carriers are at state 3 of readiness. The LSD USS SHADWELL is sailed from Souda Bay to rejoin the amphibious task force at Malta.
6 June: Security Coungil unanimously adopts a resolution for an immediate ceasefire.	6 June: 1100 local AMERICA 100 miles east of Crete and steaming eastwards at 20 knots. This was Admiral Martin's decision, not the White House's.
7 June: CINCEUR message of 1200Z states "The activities of Soviet military forces do not indicate preparations for direct military	7 June: 1200 local USS AMERICA steaming westward 60 miles SE of Crete. USSR announced the indefinite postponement of a visit by a Kashin class guided

7 June (Con't): participation.
Soviet and East European ground
and air force training appear to be
routine." U.S. ambassador in
Amman signals Washington to push
for a ceasefire because Hussein
regime may fall in Jordan. Jordan
stops fighting at midnight, but
Israelis continue to attack Jordan-
ian West Bank.

7 June (Con't): missile ship to Ports-
mouth, England. An AGI leaves the
Black Sea to supplement the Mediter-
ranean AGI force.

8 June: The Soviet airlift to the UAR,
Syria, Algeria, and Iraq begins.
Soviet harassment of the USS AMERICA
occurs. 1200Z the USS LIBERTY is
attacked by Israeli forces. Carrier
aircraft are launched to protect her.
The amphibious Task Force leaves Malta.

9 June: 0600 the Israelis attack
the Golan Heights.

9 June: USS AMERICA and the cruiser
LITTLE ROCK are sailing to the rescue
of the USS LIBERTY. 1230Z the rendez-
vous occurs.

10 June: USSR delivers an ulti-
matum to Israel. The war ends.

10 June: President Johnson orders the
Sixth Fleet eastwards, and later fleet
reverses course. Kotlin 514 breaks
off surveillance of the USS SARATOGA
at midday. The U.S. amphibious Task

POLITICAL (CON'T)	NAVAL (CON'T)
	10 June (Con't): Force discontinues passage eastwards.
15 June: Libya asks the U.S. and Britain to remove bases.	12-22 June: NATO ASW exercise "Go Ahead" in the Atlantic.
	14 June: Force of Soviet combatants east of Cyprus.
	30 June: 2 Polocny class LSMs deploy from the Black Sea. 2 Alligator LSTs deploy east of Cyprus.
	2 July: Soviet units visit Port Said and Alexandria.
	4 May 1968: First Soviet reconnaissance flight against a U.S. CVA in the Mediterranean by Egyptian based Soviet aircraft.

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